

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A polarizing plate comprising a polarizing membrane and an optically anisotropic layer formed from liquid crystal molecules, wherein the optically anisotropic layer is formed directly on the polarizing membrane by coating a coating solution containing the liquid crystal molecules on a surface of the polarizing membrane, or wherein an orientation layer is formed directly on the polarizing membrane, and the optically anisotropic layer is formed on the orientation layer by coating a coating solution containing the liquid crystal molecules on a surface of the orientation layer.

Claim 2 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 1, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the optically anisotropic layer are rod-like liquid crystal molecules, and wherein long axes of the rod-like crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of more than 5° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 3 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 2, wherein the long axes of the rod-like liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of less than 5° on average to a transmission axis of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 4 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 1, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the optically anisotropic layer are discotic liquid crystal molecules, and

wherein discotic planes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of less than 5° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 5 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 1, wherein the polarizing membrane has a thickness of 20 μm or less.

Claim 6 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 1, which further comprises a light-diffusing layer.

Claim 7 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 1, which further comprises an anti-reflection layer.

Claim 8 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 7, which further comprises a transparent support having a thickness of 70 μm or less, and the anti-reflection layer is provided on the transparent support.

Claim 9 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 1, wherein the optically anisotropic layer comprises a first optically anisotropic layer formed on the polarizing membrane and a second optically anisotropic layer formed on the first optically anisotropic layer, and wherein long axes or discotic planes of the liquid crystal molecules in the first optically anisotropic layer are oriented at an angle of more than 10° on average to a direction in which long axes or discotic planes of the liquid crystal molecules in the second optically anisotropic layer are oriented on average.

Claim 10 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 9, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the first optically anisotropic layer are rod-like liquid crystal molecules, and wherein long axes of the rod-like liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of less than 5° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 11 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 10, wherein the long axes of the rod-like liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of less than 5° on average to a transmission axis of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 12 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 10, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the second optically anisotropic layer are rod-like liquid crystal molecules, wherein long axes of the rod-like liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of more than 15° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane, and wherein an angle between the long axis of each rod-like liquid crystal molecule and the surface of the polarizing membrane varies according to a distance between the rod-like liquid crystal molecule and the polarizing membrane.

Claim 13 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 10, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the second optically anisotropic layer are discotic liquid crystal molecules, wherein discotic planes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of more than 15° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane, and wherein an angle between the discotic plane of each discotic liquid crystal molecule and the surface of the polarizing membrane varies according to the distance between the discotic liquid crystal molecule and the polarizing membrane.

Claim 14 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 11, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the second optically anisotropic layer are rod-like liquid crystal molecules, wherein long axes of the rod-like liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of less than 5° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane, and wherein the long axes of the rod-like liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of less than 5° on average to a transmission axis of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 15 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 10, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the second optically anisotropic layer are discotic liquid crystal molecules, and wherein discotic planes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of more than 85° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 16 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 9, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the first optically anisotropic layer are discotic liquid crystal molecules, and wherein discotic planes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of more than 5° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 17 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 16, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the second optically anisotropic layer are rod-like liquid crystal molecules, wherein long axes of the rod-like liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of more than 15° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane, and wherein an angle between the long axis of each rod-like liquid crystal molecule and the surface of the polarizing membrane varies according to the distance between the rod-like liquid crystal molecule and the polarizing membrane.

Claim 18 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 16, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the second optically anisotropic layer are discotic liquid crystal molecules, wherein discotic planes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of more than 15° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane, and wherein an angle between the discotic plane of each discotic liquid crystal molecule and the surface of the polarizing membrane varies according to the distance between the discotic liquid crystal molecule and the polarizing membrane.

Claim 19 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 16, wherein the liquid crystal molecules in the second optically anisotropic layer are rod-like liquid crystal molecules, and wherein long axes of the rod-like liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of less than 5° on average to a surface of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 20 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 19, wherein the long axes of the rod-like liquid crystal molecules are oriented at an angle of less than 5° on average to a transmission axis of the polarizing membrane.

Claim 21 (Original): The polarizing plate as defined in claim 9, wherein the first optically anisotropic layer functions as an orientation layer of the second optically anisotropic layer.

Claim 22 (Original): A liquid crystal display comprising a liquid crystal cell and a polarizing plate defined in claim 1.

Claims 23 and 24 (Canceled)